

Synopsis

The Magus' Rainbow Fingers: the History of Imagination and Vladimir Nabokov

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Much has been written on the development of concepts of imagination since the 18th century. There is the pioneering work of M. W. Bundy on *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought* (1927), which examines the theories from Plato to Dante. In this essay I will introduce the studies of J. M. Cocking and Antoine Faivre, both of whom explore the esoteric tradition in the history of imagination. They focus upon the concept of magical imagination. I will examine manifestations of magical imagination in the text of Nabokov's works. In my view Nabokov's imagination enables him to represent an epiphanic moment in the text where the earthly world is transformed and transfused into an blissful world. As Saint-Martin says, the role of magical imagination is to render more beautiful the realm where man lives and to bring it to greater perfection. Nabokov's art of fiction revives his lost world in *Speak Memory* and "Mademoiselle O", where his imagination furnishes enchanting clothes for his own past. According to A. Chastel, Platonism is the internal magic which turns over the superficial reality and attains the absolute reality of mind. In considering his reliance on the otherworld, we can also see Nabokov's platonic quest for preternatural reality. In his brilliant text we can find his intentions to escape from the tyranny of the present, that of matter and the causality. Finally we recognize that he ridicules the cruelty of destiny on earth.